DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 105 653 EA 007 103

AUTHOR	Heyneman, Stephen P.
TITLE	The Distribution of Currently-Funded Federal Research and Development Projects on Children, Both In and Outside the United States.
SPONS AGENCY	Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Mar 75
NOTE	25p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society (San Francisco, California, March 1975)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	Adolescents; Children; Comparative Analysis; *Comparative Education; Elementary Secondary Education; *Federal Aid; *Federal Programs; *Interagency Coordination; *Research Methodology; Tables (Data)

ABSTRACT

More than two dozen federal agencies in five departments in one way or another sponsor research or melioristic programs that have as their ultimate goal the improvement of a child's life. Text and tables describe the different programs. (Author/MLF)

ED105653

A Paper Presented at the Symposium on Education, Training, and Funding-Professional Concerns in Comparative Education at the Annual Meeting of The Comparative and International Education Society, San Francisco, March, 1975

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THE DISTRIBUTION OF CURRENTLY-FUNDED FEDERAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS ON CHILDREN, BOTH IN AND OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES

by

Stephen P. Heyneman
Senior Scientist
Social Research Group
The George Washington University

The work upon which this document is based was performed pursuant to contract HEW-100-75-0010 with the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; however the views and opinions are the sole responsibility of the author.

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INTRODUCTION:

Establishment Of The Two Interagency Panels For Research And Development In Adolescence And Early Childhood

In a complex industrial democracy such as the United States, it is normal for differing governmental agencies, while addressing identical populations, to fulfill specialized needs. So it is with children. In all, more than two dozen agencies in five departments in one way or another sponsor research or melioristic programs which have as their ultimate goal the improvement of a child's life. This is to be expected. It is also natural to find the interests of these agencies actively supporting activity on such subjects as improper nutrition and child development, or parental interaction and social deviancy. In a broader sense, one should not be surprised to find a large number of additional agencies which deal in their own ways with children and would directly benefit from having efficient access to the most recent discoveries in these two areas.

It was within this context that the Secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare requested the Director of the Office of Child Development and of the Children's Bureau to gather the most senior individuals from every agency in the Federal structure who had, within their purview, the interest of research and development on American children. This was a considerable undertaking, yet despite the fact that often bureauracies do not benefit their own organization from shared activities, the participation on the Interagency Panel on Early Childhood Research and Development right from its inception in 1970 virtually

encompassed the whole breadth of the Federal structure and was represented by its most highly responsible research and development policy personnel.

Within a year of its first meeting, and after a National Institute of Child Health and Human Development survey, it became obvious to the Panel members that the Federal government was supporting comparatively little work in the age range of adolescence. It was decided in 1972 to form a separate Interagency Panel which was to concentrate on that age period. Considerable public attention over the militancy and disenchantment of adolescents in the late 1960's and early 1970's paralleled the first meeting of representatives of 15 Federal agencies in the Fall of 1972.

By virtue of the fact that the Panels function across agencies and are supported by representatives of the highest policy-making levels in the research and evaluation branches, they can count on participation of the highest quality. This, in turn, provides a proper forum where generalities can be perceived with both clarity and consistency. Firstly, the Panels are in a strategically unique position to identify research gaps by being able to state, with empirical authority, how much effort is presently being placed on any given question. This same authority would apply to the Panel's ability to identify over-laps in research efforts which could have, heretofore, gone unnoticed. Secondly, the cataloguing and listing of every currently-funded project every year has the effect of providing a complete inter-institutional memory on what was funded, to whom, where, and for what purpose. Because it is more common for published research to

derive from those projects which happen to "succeed," the data of the Interagency Panels provide a history not only of those funded projects which may never obtain their objectives or reach publication, but catalogues these projects at one central location with facile access for professional institutions or for interested researchers. In short, these Panels provide a genuinely unique function for inter-communication between individual investigators, universities, research foundations, state and local agencies, and all agencies of the Federal government actively engaged in researching ways to benefit the lives of children and adolescents.

Activities in 1974: Marker Variables and Marker Measures

One method of plotting the interests of a group of professionals is to re-read the minutes of its meetings. In this regard, one could safely say that the Panels on both Early Childhood and Adolescence have demonstrated over the last year a consistent interest in fulfilling the need to compare research findings across disparate areas. Some amount of time at virtually every meeting was spent in a discussion over the theory of "marker" concepts, the developments within particular agencies surrounding marker policies, and the presentations by Panel members on these subjects at meetings of professional associations. For example, three formal papers on marker variables and marker measures were presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association in New Orleans on behalf of the Interagency Panels.[1]

As a caution to those who might justifiably feel uneasy about the need for government to insure comparability for the research which it funds, some pains have been taken in the Panel discussions to describe the definitional limits of marker concepts as well as the cautious processes necessary before arriving at a stage for policy. For example, it seemed generally agreed that there were four classes of marker concepts which could be distinquished: (1) variables; (2) measures; (3) core; and (4) background. They are portrayed in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

CATEGORIES OF MARKER CONCEPTS:
A FOUR CELL MODEL

	CORE	BACKGROUND
VARIABLES	XXXX	(I)
MEASURES	XXXX	(II)

In this model, marker variables can be thought of as key measurable concepts for comparing research findings, and marker measures as key indices of those concepts. Background measures or variables can be considered as those not of primary focus to the principal investigator; core variables and measures as those which are.[2] One assumption seemed germane to the discussion of Federal interest in the area of marker concepts. No policy was conceived which would proscribe either core measures or core variables across agencies for these would remain within the prerogative of the principal investigator in conjunction with the sponsoring agency.

In response to the interest expressed by both Interagency Panels, Edith Grotberg, the Chairperson, sent a letter on July 18th to all heads of Federal agencies funding research on children. The letter was titled: "Recommended Actions for Increasing Comparability of Research Findings: Marker Variables and Marker Measures." In the letter, Dr. Grotberg cited the generalized concern over the need for comparability expressed by the Panel's representatives, noted the cautionary procedures the Federal government should be aware of, but then outlined three guidelines for proposed research to which the agencies might address themselves. The first involved definitional commonalities, the second included suggestions for minimal sample descriptions, while the third explored the possibility of having the investigators review their study's relationships to other studies.

In addition to soliciting responses from the heads of agencies, the Interagency Panels hosted a day-long conference for 13 editors of major social science journals on November 4th. The central purpose of the conference was to query the editors on their experiences in assuring inter-study comparability, and to elicit their suggestions with respect to recommended policies in the future. One fact was evident as a result of the discussions: the research communities, as represented by the journal editors, shared with Panel members the common objective of obtaining the most meaningful results as quickly as possible.[3] The conference served to familiarize the editors with governmental thinking and to inaugurate their future cooperation.

In addition, the subject of marker variables and marker measures in the area of research training will be the focus of a second conference on May 3, 4 and 5th, Involving deans and administrators of doctoral programs from approximately thirty of the most significant institutions, this Spring meeting should carry the most up-to-date explications of marker variable thinking of the Interagency Panels right to the heart of the graduate research training programs, and so eventually affect the perspective of future researchers.

Patterns Of Total Federal Research Activity On Children And Adolescents In Fy '74

In FY '74 the United States Federal government allocated $303,275,051 for funding 3,116 independent research and development projects dedicated to understanding and improving the lives of children or adolescents. Gathered from each of the Agencies listed in Figure 2, these projects are displayed in Table 1 according to the type of their research purpose and their methodology.[4] Clearly the majority of projects (62%) and FY '74 funds (75%) were allocated for applied purposes. Evaluation research accounted for 5.1 percent of the number of projects, research on planning 1.7 percent, dissemination 5.4 percent, and basic research 25.6 percent. Within these project proposals, survey research techniques were more frequently employed than either case studies or clinical approaches. Questionnaires were the most frequently utilized, followed by the use of observation and interviews.

Figure 2

AGENCIES FROM WHICH THE DATA ARE DERIVED

Department of Health, Education and Welfare:

(1) Office of Youth Development (OYD)
(2) National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)
(3) National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)
(4) National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA)
(5) National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)
(6) National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Stroke (NINDS)
(7) Bureau of Community Health Services (BCHS)
(8) Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS)
(9) National Institute of Education (NIE)
(10) Office of Child Development (OCD)

Office of Education:

(11) Office of Planning, Budgeting and Evaluation (OPBE)
(12) Bureau of Occupational and Adult Education (BOAE)
(13) Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (BEH)
(14) Bureau of Indian Education (BIE)
(15) Right-To-Read Program
(16) Bureau of School Systems (BSS)

(17) Department of Agriculture (USDA)
(18) Department of Labor (DOL)
(19) ACTION

When these projects are categorized by their primary focus, as they are in Table 2a, other patterns are evident. Much of the activity is focused through the schools; schools accounted for 52 percent of the projects and 71 percent of the project funds. Approximately 30 percent focused upon child development; 11.7 percent on physical development, 9 percent on cognitive development, and 6.7 percent on socioemotional development. In addition, health and welfare services were the focus of 10 percent of the projects, the family 3.5 percent, and law enforcement 1.1 percent. In Table 2b these subject areas are displayed for basic research projects. In this category the most frequent focus is upon child development of which there were 614 projects accounting for 19 percent of Federal activity on children and adolescents.

Because of the significant portion of Federal research and development efforts on children focused primarily through the schools, it might be relevant for Comparative Educators to learn some of the characteristics in this area. Of the 1,631 educational projects, the most sizeable effort was allocated to demonstration projects (Table 3). In addition, there were 94 evaluation projects, 26 pilot studies, and 67 basic research studies on schools.

When Federal research and development on children and adolescents is broken down into educational foci as it is in Table 4, the strong effort in the field of educational curriculum becomes particularly evident. Approximately 32 percent of all these Federal activities in some way involved school curriculum. The most frequent category of involvement was that of

teaching techniques (991 projects).[5] Open classrooms were a subject in 197 projects, tutorial teaching in 142, alternatives to schools in 121, and career education in 89. Furthermore, when the adjective "school" is withdrawn, and the projects which involve an educational curriculum outside of schools is added (Table 5), the role of curriculum assumes a place of preeminence, for it is included in 41.3 percent of all Federal research and development projects.

Table 5 also illustrates the importance with which the family is viewed (426 projects), language development (207 projects) and the spread of I.Q., academic achievement and self-concept indices in both research in general, and within the category of basic research specifically. There were 184 project proposals which intended to utilize some index of self-concept, 241 of academic achievement, and 63 percent of I.Q.[6]

Federal Research On Children Outside The United States in FY '74

In FY '74 the Federal government funded 77 research and development projets on children outside the 50 United States. These involved an expenditure of approximately $4,168,000 by 10 agencies, and accounted for about 2 percent of all Federal research activity on nonadults.[7] Of these 77 projects, 43 could be categorized as for basic research purposes; 31 for applied research purposes (Table 6). As among Federal research on children in general, the most frequent intention was to utilize the methodological techniques of interview, questionnaires, and observations.

Thirty-eight of the 77 overseas research projects (49.4%) focused primarily upon aspects of child development, 14 of those upon questions of socioemotional and 15 upon questions on physical development (Table 7). Eighteen projects (23%) focused upon schools overseas. There were six projects primarily investigating social change, and seven on the family.

However, these statistical distributions hide specific characteristics of this activity. For example, as part of its interest in investigating the causes of alcoholism, the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) is sponsoring an international study on the etiological aspects, asking among other things whether adopted children of alcoholics in a Danish sample have greater frequency of alcoholism than adopted children of non-alcoholics. A National Institute of Health study is comparing the classroom behavior and academic success of French and American school children. The Office of Child Development is looking at the need among professionals in 40 countries for easily accessible information concerning early childhood. The National Institute of Education is sponsoring two interesting studies on educational achievement overseas: one on the effects of introducing a national standardized test in Ireland, and another its role in social mobility in Japan. In addition, it is sponsoring three valuable studies on the role of schools in cultural change: schools as agents of national and international political learning, their effect upon the adaptation of agrarian migrants to a Northern Italian industrial center, and an international study on the structure of control within systems of higher education.

These are all important projects of which educational scholars should be aware. The point is that even during periods of national economic frugality, the crucial importance of research and development on children and adolescents is unfaltering. This description of these 3,116 projects for FY '74 should be one indication that government agencies have lost neigher their interest nor their ability to sponsor a variety of valuable, child-oriented research, both inside and outside of the United States.

Footnotes

[1]They were entitled: (1) "A Progress Report on Developing Comparability in Research," by Maure Hurt, Jr., of the Social Research Group; (2) "Societal Change and the Rate of Research Progress," by Richard Bell ex-Chief of the Child Research Branch, NIMH, now at the Department of Psychology, University of Virginia and Thomas Hertz of the Social Research Group; and (3) "In Furtherance of Cumulative Knowledge: Some NIMH Initiatives," by David Pearl, Chief of the Behavioral Sciences Branch of the National Institute of Mental Health. The concept of marker variables was introduced and summarized by the moderator, Edith Grotberg from the Office of Child Development and Chairperson of the Interagency Panels on Adolescence and Early Childhood.

[2]In addition, there are potentially two additional issues within the subject of research comparison; those involving: (1) definitional and (2) methodological commonalities.

[3]"Proceedings of the Conference on Comparability in Research, November 4, 1974, Invited Participants: Journal Editors," Edited by Richard Q. Bell and Maure Hurt, Jr., Social Research Group, The George Washington University, January, 1975, p. 18 [mimeographed].

[4]Among the studies not included would be those funded through the Law Enforcement Assistance Agency within the Department of Justice, the Department of Defense, and the National Science Foundation. LEAA, however, will be included in FY '75.

[5]These categories in Table 4, 5 and 7 are not mutually exclusive.

[6]Furthermore, these indices were utilized by a surprising variety of agencies. I.Q. was used in proposals funded by seven agencies; academic achievement in 14 agencies, and self-concept in 16 agencies.

[7]These do not include any of the PL 480 funds which are spread over the social, physical and biological sciences in five Federal agencies. Even within the Office of Education the PL 480 monies for Fulbright-Hays Act related research are spread widely throughout the academic disciplines, having only a circumstantial with education as a research focus.

TABLE 1

TOTAL FEDERAL RESEARCH ACTIVITY INVOLVING
CHILDREN OR ADOLESCENTS IN FY '74
BY PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS

BASIC AND APPLIED RESEARCH

	% of Federal Projects[a] (N)	% of Federal Funds[b] ($ In Millions)
TYPE OF RESEARCH[c]		
Basic Research	25.6 (798)	12.9 (38.8)
Applied Research	62.2 (1,941)	75.3 (227.6)
Evaluation	5.1 (158)	4.2 (12.7)
Research on Planning	1.7 (52)	.9 (2.7)
Research Dissemination Activities	5.4 (167)	6.6 (20.0)
METHODOLOGIES[d]		
Clinical	7.3 (226)	6.4 (19.1)
Case Study	4.7 (146)	3.1 (9.3)
Survey Techniques	11.1 (346)	8.8 (26.6)
Observational Techniques	14.6 (456)	11.5 (34.5)
Interview Techniques	12.7 (395)	10.8 (32.4)
Use of Questionnaires	14.7 (457)	12.9 (39.2)

[a]Total N = 3,116 projects.

[b]Total $ = 303.3 million.

[c]Each project was placed in one funding category and in one research, development and evaluation category. Thus, within these two, each subcategory is mutually exclusive of each other subcategory; the sum of the percentages therefore approximates one hundred.

[d]The descriptive characteristics are not mutually exclusive. A project proposal may have mentioned the intention to use one, more than one, or none of these methodological categories; the sum of the proportion figures should not approximate one hundred.

TABLE 2a

TOTAL FEDERAL RESEARCH ACTIVITY INVOLVING
CHILDREN OR ADOLESCENTS IN FY '74
BY PRIMARY PROJECT FOCUS

BASIC AND APPLIED RESEARCH

Primary Focus[a]	% of Federal Projects[b] (N)		% of Federal Funds[c] ($-In Millions)	
Development	29.9	(901)	16.3	(50.6)
Physical Development	11.7	(365)	8.4	(25.4)
Cognitive Development	9.0	(279)	3.6	(10.9)
Socioemotional Development	6.7	(209)	2.3	(7.1)
Family	3.5	(110)	1.6	(4.8)
Neighborhood	.4	(12)	.3	(.8)
Social Change	1.4	(43)	1.0	(3.2)
Health/Welfare Services	10.3	(332)	7.1	(21.4)
Educational Institutions	52.3	(1,631)	71.5	(216.0)
Preschool	4.9	(152)	4.4	(13.4)
Primary School	14.0	(438)	24.3	(73.4)
Secondary School	6.8	(212)	4.8	(14.4)
Post-Secondary School	2.9	(90)	4.1	(12.5)
Vocational/Technical Schools	3.5	(108)	4.9	(14.8)
Law Enforcement	1.1	(34)	1.0	(2.9)
The Research Process	2.0	(63)	1.2	(3.6)

[a]All major categories mutually exclusive, and all subcategories within a major category are also mutually exclusive.

[b]Total N = 3,116 projects.

[c]Total $ = 303.3 million.

TABLE 2b

TOTAL FEDERAL RESEARCH ACTIVITY INVOLVING
CHILDREN OR ADOLESCENTS IN FY '74
BY PRIMARY PROJECT FOCUS

BASIC RESEARCH ONLY

Primary Focus[a]	% of Federal Projects[b] (N)	% of Federal Funds[c] ($-In Millions)
Development	19.7 (614)	10.7 (32.2)
Physical Development	8.4 (263)	6.4 (19.3)
Cognitive Development	6.3 (196)	2.1 (6.4)
Socioemotional Development	4.2 (130)	1.4 (4.3)
Family	2.3 (72)	1.0 (3.2)
Neighborhood	.2 (5)	.1 (.2)
Social Change	.7 (23)	.3 (.8)
Health/Welfare Services	2.5 (78)	.7 (2.0)
Educational Institutions	2.2 (67)	.5 (1.6)
Preschool	.1 (3)	.0 (.1)
Primary School	.3 (9)	.1 (.4)
Secondary School	.3 (8)	.0 (.1)
Post-Secondary School	.3 (9)	.0 (.1)
Vocational/Technical Schools	.1 (2)	.0 (.0)
Law Enforcement	-- --	-- --
The Research Process	.2 (7)	.2 (.6)
		Total Average

[a]All major categories mutuall exclusive, and all subcategories within a major category are also mutually exclusive.

[b]Total N = 3,116 projects.

[c]Total $ = 303.3 million.

TABLE 3

PROPORTION OF FEDERAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ON SCHOOLS IN FY '74

	Percent of Federal Research and Development on Children[a]	(N)
Educational Evaluation	3.0	94
Educational Pilot Studies	1.0	26
Educational Demonstration Projects	25.0	774
Basic Research on Schools	2.0	67
Educational Utilization, Development And Planning	22.0	670
Total	52.3	1,631

[a]Total N = 3,116 projects.

TABLE 4

FEDERAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ON TEACHING[a]

	% of Projects[b]	(N)	% of Funds[c]	($ in Millions)
Vocational Education	2.7	(83)	3.8	(11.4)
Career Education	2.9	(89)	5.2	(15.8)
Work Experience	.8	(25)	3.1	(9.4)
Teaching Techniques	31.8	(991)	49.3	(149.3)
Bilingual Education	2.7	(83)	4.5	(13.7)
Tutorial Education	4.6	(142)	3.2	(9.6)
Computer Education	1.9	(59)	1.7	(5.2)
TV Education	1.7	(53)	8.6	(26.1)
Open Classroom	6.3	(197)	15.3	(46.3)
Non-Graded Schools	.6	(18)	.4	(1.2)
Team Teaching	1.2	(38)	3.1	(9.2)
Educational Alternatives	3.9	(121)	6.0	(18.0)

[a]The descriptive characteristics are not mutually exclusive. A project proposal may have mentioned the intention to use one, more than one, or none of these methodological categories; the sum of the proportion figures should not approximate one hundred.

[b]Total Federal Projects = 3,116.

[c]Total Federal Funds = $303.3 million.

TABLE 5

FEDERAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT AFFECTING NONADULTS IN SIX SUBJECT AREAS[a]

	% of Projects[b]	(N)	% of Funds[c]	($ In Millions)	% of Projects[b]	(N)	% of Funds[c]	($ In Millions)
I.Q.	2.0	(63)	1.2	(3.8)	1.0	(30)	.7	(2.1)
Academic Achievement	7.7	(241)	7.0	(21.2)	3.4	(105)	2.3	(7.0)
Self-Concept	5.9	(184)	7.3	(22.1)	1.7	(53)	.8	(2.5)
Nutrition	2.0	(63)	1.3	(4.0)	1.2	(37)	.7	(2.0)
Language Development	6.6	(207)	5.1	(15.3)	3.0	(93)	1.3	(4.1)
Family	13.7	(426)	8.7	(26.4)	6.2	(194)	3.3	(10.0)
Educational Curriculum	41.3	(1,287)	58.3	(176.4)	.6	(17)	.2	(.6)

[a]The descriptive characteristics are not mutually exclusive. A project proposal may have mentioned the intention to use one, more than one, or none of these methodological categories; the sum of the proportion figures should not approximate one hundred.

[b]Total Federal Projects = 3,116.

[c]Total Federal Funds = $303.3 million.

TABLE 6

FEDERAL RESEARCH ACTIVITY INVOLVING CHILDREN OR ADOLESCENTS OUTSIDE THE U.S. IN FY '74, BY PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS

	Number of Projects	Percent Of Overseas Activity (N=77)
TYPE OF RESEARCH[a]		
Basic	43	55.8
Applied	31	40.3
Other[b]	3	3.9
METHODOLOGIES[c]		
Clinical	6	7.8
Case Studies	7	9.1
Survey Analysis	19	24.0
Observational Analysis	17	22.1
Interview Techniques	23	29.9
Questionnaires	21	27.3

[a]Each project was placed in one funding category and in one research, development and evaluation category. Thus, within these two, each subcategory is mutually exclusive of each other subcategory; the sum of the percentages therefore approximates one hundred.

[b]This includes evaluation research and research dissemination.

[c]The descriptive characteristics are not mutually exclusive. A project proposal may have mentioned the intention to use one, more than one, or none of these methodological categories; the sum of the proportion figures should not approximate one hundred.

TABLE 7

FEDERAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY ON CHILDREN OR ADOLESCENTS IN FY '74 OUTSIDE THE U.S., BY PRIMARY PROJECT FOCUS

Primary Focus	Number of Projects	Percent of Overseas Activity (N = 77)
Development	38	49.4
Physical	15	19.5
Cognitive	5	6.5
Socioemotional	14	18.2
Family	7	9.1
Neighborhood	--	--
Social Change	6	7.8
Health/Welfare Institutions	4	5.2
Educational Institutions	18	23.4
Law Enforcement	3	3.9
The Research Process Itself	1	1.3

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